RICE

Teacher EDUCATION

LEARN. TEACH. LEAD.

Contemporary Issues in Education
EDUC 202 / 502 – Fall 2013
Tuesday 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Mechanical Engineering 128

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to this next chapter of your education studies at Rice University, and specifically to our study of Contemporary Issues in Education! In reflecting on your past experiences in the educational arena, you have no doubt witnessed many of the issues impacting schools, students, and educators. *So how can a new educator make sense of the trends that will impact their daily interactions with students, and what can educators do to prepare themselves for the rapidly changing field they will soon enter?*

Over the next fifteen weeks, we will engage in a comprehensive examination of these key questions through a combination of in-class discussions, written reflections, simulation exercises, and reading of texts. My aim is to ensure that each of you feels energized and challenged by the ongoing exchange of ideas you will be engaged in with your colleagues, and that you in turn feel confident in your ability to actively contribute to that process.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES

In order to guide our discussions, this course will be centered around five guiding questions. You will know you have mastered the course content when you are able to answer each guiding question in a detailed and thoughtful way. Your midterm and final exams will be derived exclusively from the discussions.

- ***What qualities are required today to foster a great school or classroom?***
- ***How have schools and school systems historically changed and adapted?***
- ***Who is served by today's schools, and what are the unique needs of those populations?***
- ***How are schools effectively led?***
- ***What challenges will schools and school systems face in the future?***

STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES

Texas Education Agency   ***Pedagogy & Professional Responsibilities***   ***Standards for Educator Certification (EC-Grade 12)***
Standard I   The teacher designs instruction appropriate for all students that reflects an understanding of relevant content and is based on continuous and appropriate assessment.   *Standard II*   The teacher creates a classroom environment of respect and rapport that fosters a positive climate for learning, equity, and excellence.   *Standard III*   The teacher promotes student learning by providing responsive instruction that makes use of effective communication techniques, instructional strategies that actively engage students in the learning process, and timely, high-quality feedback.   *Standard IV*   The teacher fulfills professional roles and responsibilities and adheres to legal and ethical requirements of the profession.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Throughout the fifteen weeks, you will be expected to read and reflect on specific sections of the course texts. Please ensure you have continuous access to the texts throughout the course.

TEXT	***AVAILABILITY***
Kids and School Reform *Wasley, Hampel, & Clark, 1997. Jossey-Bass.* *ISBN – 0-7879-1065-1*	On Reserve at Fondren Library Personal copies are best obtained through bn.com.
Teaching as Leadership *Farr, 2010. Jossey-Bass.* *ISBN - 0470432861*	Personal copies can be easily obtained from amazon.com or bn.com. Also available for free as an e-book through the Fondren Library website.
The One Best System *Tyack, 1974, Harvard University Press.* *ISBN – 0674637828*	On Reserve at Fondren Library Personal copies can be easily obtained from amazon.com or bn.com.

REQUIRED DIGITAL TEXTS

The following texts will also be utilized in course discussions, but purchase of these texts is not required. Please feel free to access free digital or hard copies through Fondren Library.

TEXT	***AVAILABILITY***
Fighting to Save Our Urban Schools – and Winning!: Lessons From Houston *McAdams, 2000: Teachers College Press.* *ISBN - 0807738840*	Available for free as an e-book through the Fondren Library website. Also On Reserve at Fondren Library
Shaping School Culture : Pitfalls, Paradoxes, and Promises *Deal & Peterson, 2009: Jossey-Bass.* *ISBN - 0787996793*	Available for free as an e-book through the Fondren Library website. Also On Reserve at Fondren Library

In addition, your understanding of the concepts outlined in the texts will be supplemented by your analysis of specific articles and case studies. Each of the relevant case documents can either be downloaded directly or will be distributed in class.

COURSE FORMAT

I have designed this class to foster maximum opportunities for involvement and engagement for each of you. We will focus a significant amount of each class session on discussion of key concepts. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS BOTH VALUED AND EXPECTED! In addition, certain sessions will integrate guest speakers, video reflection, simulation activities, and group interaction.

I pride myself on being accessible to my students whenever I am needed. Thus you should always feel free to raise questions or discuss the material. As future stewards of your own classroom culture, I know you will appreciate the importance of maintaining a environment in which we are supportive of each other's contributions and ideas.

GRADING POLICIES/PROCEDURES

Throughout these fifteen weeks, you will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate your mastery of the course concepts. The ultimate grade you earn will be based on these products. I have no hidden agenda in relation to grades, and am eager for all students to receive the highest grades possible provided they meet these basic requirements. ☺

5 ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENTS	25 points
5 DISCUSSION GROUP SUBMISSIONS	25 points
1 RESEARCH PAPER & PRESENTATION	20 points
MID-TERM EXAMINATION	15 points
FINAL EXAMINATION	15 points

The style required for papers is that of the American Psychological Association (APA).

GRADE	GRADE POINTS	NUMERIC RANGE
A+	4.33	97-100
A	4.0	93-96
A-	3.66	90-92
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.0	83-86
B-	2.66	80-82
C+	2.33	77-79
C	2.0	73-76
C-	1.66	70-72
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.0	63-66
D-	0.66	60-62
F	0.0	Below 60

COURSE SCHEDULE

Over the course of the semester, we will delve deeply into multiple facets of the issues impacting schools, students, educators, and communities. Though the outline below offers you a road map for what we will cover, we may alter it slightly based on our ongoing progress. In addition, I reserve the right to add or remove readings based on the needs of the group. The tentative schedule is as follows:

Week	Date	Discussion Topics	Following this class, you should …
1	Tues., Aug. 27th	Introduction to the U.S. Education Context What are the big questions impacting students, schools, and communities?	Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • *"A Nation at Risk"* • *"Goals 2000"* • *"Should America Be More Like Them?"* • *"Too Little Too Late"* • *"How The World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out On Top"* By September 2nd, submit a two-page reflection justifying whether the findings outlined in "A Nation At Risk" and "Goals 2000" in retrospect seem appropriate, overly aspirational, or not ambitious enough AND explain why.
2	Tues., Sep. 3rd	How are we performing as a nation? How do our schools compare to those in other nations? What lessons can we learn from other contexts?	Read selected excerpts of the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • *Children at Risk* • *Houston Area Survey* Watch *Dropout Nation.* (available on OwlSpace) By September 9th, submit a two-page reflection describing what you feel are the most pressing issues for Houston's kids.

Week	Date	Discussion Topics	Following this class, you should …
3	Tues., Sep. 10th	Within the fourth largest city in America, how are our schools performing? How do those results impact Houston's residents and communities as a whole? *GUEST SPEAKERS:* *Dr. Stephen Klineberg & Dr. Bob Sanborn*	Read Tyack. By September 16th, respond to the online discussion prompts.
4	Tues., Sep. 17th	What are the historical reasons why schools are organized as they are? What subsequent impacts do those structures have on student achievement? *"Waiting for Superman"*	Watch the following videos: (available on OwlSpace) • *Kopp and Ravitch: What Does Real Reform Require?* • *"The N.Y. Charter School Debate"* Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • *"The Embattled Teacher"* Read selected excerpts of the following text (available on OwlSpace): • *"Rhetoric Versus Reality: What We Know and What We Need to Know About Vouchers and Charter Schools"* By September 23rd, respond to the online discussion prompts.

Week	Date	Discussion Topics	Following this class, you should …
5	Tues., Sep. 24th	How has the American education system adapted to changing demands? How has the introduction of school choice (charter schools, magnet/vanguard, vouchers) impacted school and student performance on the macro and micro levels? How have school systems' recent attempts to attract new human capital into the teaching profession worked? *GUEST SPEAKERS:* *Mr. Charles Glover & Mr. Jason Bernal*	Read the following texts: <u>(distributed in class)</u> • *"At-Risk Youth"* • *"Affirming Diversity"* <u>(available on OwlSpace)</u> • *"Special Education Overview"* • *"Bilingual & ESL Education Overview"* • *Brown v. Board of Education* • *"State of Gifted Education in Texas" (Just read summary.)* By September 30th, submit a two-page reflection sharing your observations on how you have seen the needs of specialized student populations served (or not served) in the course of your school observations.
6	Tues., Oct. 1st	Who is served by today's schools, and what are their unique needs? • Limited English Proficiency Students • Special Education Students • Gifted & Talented Students • Diverse Learners • At-Risk Youth What are the implications of these student populations on teachers, schools, and school systems?	Read Deal & Peterson. Prepare a set of questions to pose to colleagues at the upcoming "Life in Schools" event about their campus observations. Be prepared to discuss: • Quality & Rigor of Instruction • Campus & Classroom Culture • Service of Diverse Student Populations • Student & Teacher Commitment to Achievement

Week	Date	Discussion Topics	Following this class, you should …
7	Tues., Oct. 8th Thurs., Oct. 10th	"Life in Schools" – 5:00 p.m. H.I.S.D. Board Mtg. – 5:00 p.m.	Read the following texts: • McAdams p. 248-265 (available via Fondren) • *"HISD Overview"* (available on OwlSpace) • *"HISD Declaration"* (available on OwlSpace) By October 15th, respond to the online discussion prompts.
8	*Tues., Oct. 15th*	*MIDTERM RECESS*	Read the following texts: • Wasley, Hampel, & Clark • *"The Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools"* (available on OwlSpace) • *"Seven Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership"* (available on OwlSpace)
SUBMIT MIDTERM EXAM BY FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18TH AT 6 P.M.			
9	Tues., Oct. 22nd	What are the tenets of highly effective schools? What do today's students need from their school environments?	Read the following texts: • Farr • *"Teaching Effectiveness: Expanding The Solution"* (available on OwlSpace) • *"The Irreplaceables" Executive Summary* • *"America's Teacher-Training Programs Aren't Good Enough"* • *"The Widget Effect"* Using the "Teaching As Leadership" rubric, analyze one of the teachers you have observed in a two-page written reflection.

Week	Date	Discussion Topics	Following this class, you should …
10	Tues., Oct. 29th	What qualities must today's teachers demonstrate to ensure effectiveness? How can novice educators be optimally prepared to be successful? How can the teaching profession retain quality educators? How should educators be accurately evaluated?	Read the following texts: (all available on OwlSpace) • *"How Texas Inflicts Bad Textbooks on Us"* • *"No Child Left Behind Executive Summary"* • *"Obama's 'Race to the Top'"* • *"Elementary & Secondary Education Act"* • *"Should All States Meet The Same Standards?* • *"T.E.A. Professional Standards"* • *Texas School Funding Summary* By November 4th, respond to the online discussion prompts.
11	Tues., Nov. 5th	What is the role of the federal government in leading schools? What is the role of states in leading schools? What is the role of local districts and communities in leading schools? What are the key areas of focus or controversy on each of these levels?	Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • *"What No School Can Do"* • *"American Schooling & Educational Inequality: A Forecast for the 21st Century"* • *"America Skips School: Why We Talk So Much about Education and Do So Little"* Following your reading of the aforementioned texts, respond to the online discussion prompts.

Week	Date	Discussion Topics	Following this class, you should …
12	Tues., Nov. 12th	How can schools adjust to the ever-increasing demands on their resources? How can schools address pervasive issues of inequality? Can American society become truly invested in improving American schools?	Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • *Danielson Teacher Observation Rubrics* • *Marzano School Leadership Rubrics* • *"Teaching As Leadership" Rubric* • *"Rating a Teacher Observation Tool"* Based on what you learn from each of these tools, develop your own hybrid evaluation tool for providing feedback to either a specific teacher or a school in general. Then use it to compose a summative evaluation on that school or teacher. Be prepared to share it in class.
13	Tues., Nov. 19th	Classroom Observation Reflection & Next Steps	Group 1 members should post introductory questions on the discussion board no later than Friday, November 22nd. Group 2 members should respond to the introductory questions on the discussion board no later than Monday, November 25th.
SUBMIT RESEARCH PAPERS BY FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22ND AT 6 P.M.			
14	Tues., Nov. 26th	Issue Presentations – Group 1	Group 2 members should post introductory questions on the discussion board no later than Friday, November 29th Group 1 members should respond to the introductory questions on the discussion board no later than Monday, December 2nd .
15	Tues., Dec. 3rd	Issue Presentations – Group 2	
SUBMIT FINAL EXAM BY WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18TH AT 6 P.M.			

ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

RESEARCH PAPER

Over the course of this semester, you will identify a wide range of pressing issues impacting kids, schools, and communities. Though it is impossible to fully address all of these issues in a one-semester class, I would like for each of you to become experts on the specific challenges related to one of these issues.

You will be asked to select one specific issue impacting American schools. Some potential topics could include (but are not restricted to):

Accountability
Achievement Gap
Adequate Yearly Progress
After-School Programs
Alternative Teacher Certification
Assessment
Character Education
Charter Schools
Choice
Class Size
College Access
Comprehensive School Reform
Desegregation
Distance Learning
Dropouts
English-Language Learners
High School Reform
Home Schooling
Low-Performing Schools
Parent Involvement
Prekindergarten
Privatization of Public Education
Professional Development
Reading
Religion in Schools
Rural Education
School Construction
School Finance
School-to-Work
Social Promotion
Special Education
Standards
Student Health
Student Mobility
Teacher Quality
Technology in Education
Title I
Tracking
Violence and Safety
Vouchers
Year-Round Schooling

You may select any topic you wish; however, it can not simply be an extended analysis of any of the individual topics we discussed in class. You will then thoroughly review the research on this topic, and prepare a paper that summarizes both the current findings on your issue as well as your ideas for potential solutions. Your paper should be a minimum of 15 pages in proper APA format.

You will be expected to submit a one-paragraph topic proposal to me no later than Tuesday, November 5th. (You should of course feel free to do so earlier whenever you are so inspired!)

Your final papers will be due by Friday, November 22nd . You will then have the opportunity to facilitate a 15-20 minute discussion on your topic to the class. I will share further details on the presentations as the deadline draws nearer.

Your combined paper and presentation is worth 20 points.

REFLECTION ASSIGNMENTS

Reflection assignments offer me the opportunity to witness your application of key course concepts. These essays should be written in academic language, though I understand if certain topics tend to lend themselves more to a first-person narrative. APA formatting should be used for citations.

Reflections should be a MINIMUM of two pages in Times New Roman 12-pt. font. If you choose to write more than that, I'll be pleased. I'll be even happier if I see you using your reflections to begin formulating questions for the upcoming class discussion.

Each reflection essay is worth 5 points.

DISCUSSION BOARD SUBMISSIONS

On weeks when you are not expected to prepare a reflection assignment, you will be asked to contribute to an online discussion forum focusing on key questions for the upcoming week's session. *It is your responsibility to check the discussion board on a weekly basis for updates or additional submissions.*

My criteria for grading your submissions is simply whether you contributed meaningful insights to the discussion, rather than basing it on an arbitrary number of posts. It is in your best interests, however, to contribute frequently to the online discussions.

Each week's discussion board submissions are worth 5 points.

MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMS

Two examinations will be administered during the course. The midterm and final will be comprised exclusively of essay questions. These will be open-book/open-note tests. .

MIDTERM EXAM: No Later Than Friday, October 18th
FINAL EXAM: No Later Than Wednesday, December 18th

Each of these exams are worth 15 points.

IN-SCHOOL OBSERVATION

Finally, you will be expected to complete at least five hours of observation in a Houston-area middle or high school. We will be using the insights you draw from these experiences in our discussions.

I will share specific information with you on local campuses for which Rice has already negotiated access. You will be expected to log your observation hours, which you will submit at the end of the semester.

Please let me know if you expect any logistical challenges or require assistance in arranging access to an additional campus.

I reserve the right to deduct up to 10 points from any student who has not completed observations.

SHARING YOUR WORK

A major rationale for the design of this course is to foster an even broader sharing of your knowledge and expertise among your classmates. For that reason, many of the assignments have been designed to serve not only as a valuable learning experience for yourself but also as a catalyst for group dialogue (e.g. analyses, reflection essays). I deeply value and appreciate your continued commitment to sharing your work with your peers, and will ask that you also show this same appreciation and respect to others as they too share their insights with you. You may also rest assured that any grades accrued on these assignments will remain strictly confidential.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Students who have special needs addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act who need any test or course material accommodations should feel free to request assistance through Rice's Disability Support Services at (713) 348-5841 or at adarice@rice.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The university system is based on a respect of intellectual property. Citing sources of information used in one's work and total reliance on personal ability in individual assessments are fundamentals in scholarly behavior. Breaches in academic integrity will be documented and reported to the Honor Council. The instructor has the right to fail the student for the specific project or for the entire course.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

It is the instructor's policy that late assignments will not be accepted. Exceptions to this policy are only allowed due to individual extenuating circumstances and will be at the discretion of the instructor to accept a late assignment and to make appropriate point deductions for lateness.

ATTENDANCE

Attainment of the objectives of this course is directly related to the developmental sequences of experiences from one class meeting to another; thus, frequent absences from class makes it unlikely that a grade of A could be earned. Students will be expected to attend all classes and be punctual. If you come late because of traffic or other reasons, please come in and make sure you get the handout/s, activities, etc.

As busy individuals, there may be a time when you cannot be in class. In this case, please let the instructor know in advance. **One class may be missed for a valid reason with permission**. You are responsible for the content and assignments that are missed.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

Often, students enter a course thinking that they can take an "Incomplete" (INC) grade if they decide they will not complete the course requirements on time. Please keep in mind that students will not be allowed to take a grade of INC in this course due to poor planning on their part.

As your instructor, I am required to report this designation to the Office of the Registrar when a student fails to complete a course because of verified illness or other circumstances beyond the student's control that occur during the semester. If you find you do have a legitimate reason for the INC grade, please talk to me as soon as possible to discuss the situation and to identify the documentation that will be required to support your request. For additional information please refer to http://registrar.rice.edu/facstaff/grade_info/.

INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY

All students will be expected to be proficient with a word processing system and using internet for literature review searches. In addition, all students are required to:
(1) communicate by email
(2) complete assignments using a word processing program
(3) submit assignments to the instructor by email
(4) use the library's electronic databases for literature reviews
(5) utilize a class discussion board for ongoing questions, discussions and student concerns.

Thank you for all that you will do for Houston's kids, and for committing to advancing your own professional skills through your education studies! I look forward to a great semester!